



# News & Views

## Gigi Talcott

28th District

### Bridgeport Way Office:

10221 Bridgeport Way SW  
Lakewood, WA 98499  
589-7296

**Home phone:** 564-9779

**Email:** [talcott\\_gi@leg.wa.gov](mailto:talcott_gi@leg.wa.gov)

### Toll-free Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

### TTY (Hearing-impaired Hotline):

1-800-635-9993

### Legislative information

**on the Internet:** [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

### Talcott's legislative homepage:

<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/talcott.htm>

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Here's the latest chapter on what's happening in Olympia. While 2,000 words can't give you an in-depth look at 2,000 issues, I like to be **"on the record"** on how I'm representing you in Olympia.

We're not likely to agree on everything (even my husband and I don't) but you're always welcome to give me a call at home, 564-9779, if you want to know more. **I like helping people and solving problems.** I'm honored to serve you in this way.

Gratefully,

Gigi Talcott  
State Representative

## Health care choices

Most (approximately 56 percent) employees work for small job-providers. These people often have to go without health care coverage because it's simply too expensive.

You may have heard about the totally out-of-control debate on House Bill 2460. It was shameful to hear elected representatives behaving in such a way. **We're here to solve problems**, and this sure isn't how to do it.

Fortunately after weeks of intense, contentious debate, cooler heads prevailed and we made a small, yet helpful, **improvement to health care coverage**. More must be done. Increasing affordable health care options is important to all of us.

## Your tax dollars

### General Fund

Wanting to **"hold the line" on spending**, I opposed the first budget that left less than a penny in savings for every tax dollar it spent. We need a reserve to pay for new students, natural disasters and convicted criminals beyond what we can accurately predict.

The good news is this year's final budget leaves a more **responsible reserve of \$305 million** after we increased enrollment for college students, added \$20.7 million for children's medical premiums, added a new \$13 million for nursing home and home health-care workers, and added an additional \$9.5 million for teachers' health care benefits (that's \$587 per month for every teacher).

The bad news is this compromise budget already **puts the state's next budget forecast in the red** by nearly a billion dollars for next year.

### Capital Budget

The biggest winners in the state's building budget this year were our two- and four-year colleges and the students they serve. Here at home, it **authorizes Pierce College to build a student center** paid for by student fees, and provides \$675,000 for an **autism center** at University of Washington - Tacoma.



## Courts end our state's "blanket" primary election

Last year, the **courts declared that our state's popular "blanket" primary was unconstitutional**. In February, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear our state's position on preserving that primary election.

In March, the Legislature adopted a replacement for the unconstitutional September election that would have allowed voters to pick and choose from candidates from any and all political parties.

In April, the governor vetoed that possibility. Yesterday (it's tax day, April 15<sup>th</sup>, as I'm writing this) Judge Burgess issued a court order that permanently bars the state from conducting a "blanket" primary. Now it's clear, the popular "blanket" primary election is permanently dead.

That leaves us with a new September primary election that mirrors Montana's system. Voters would be required to pick one ballot from ballots of the three major political parties. A Voter can only choose candidates listed on the Democratic, Republican or Libertarian ballot they've selected, although the voter's choice of which ballot they pick on that one day would remain private.

**While we still don't know what may be decided in the courts between now and September, our November general election, at least, will not change.** I'm certain this debate will continue!

## Helping home care workers

**Home care workers often provide the most intimate care for many of our neighbors and loved ones.** In 2001, the voters passed Initiative 775. In August 2002, home care workers voted to unionize. Their 2003 contract was returned for renegotiation.

This year, the Legislature approved their new contract providing a 50 cent per hour increase with up to \$400 per month for health care coverage.

## Voices of victims heard

The **best surprise** of this year's legislature, for me, was the passage of House Bill 2400 – the Child Protection Act of 2004. The proposed changes to the law didn't even get a public hearing until after the deadline.

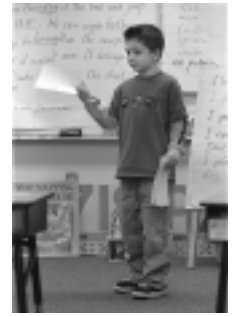
After a molester who had raped a 12-year-old girl was sentenced to counseling instead of jail, determined citizens called, wrote, e-mailed and collected thousands of children's tennis shoes to grab attention to the issue. Legislators listened.

Thanks in part to all your calls, sentencing options for sex offenders will provide **more community security** from now on.



## Progress in education

In 1999, only five out of ten fourth grade students at Dower Elementary School in Lakewood could read fourth grade books. Now, eight out of ten can and they're still improving. Why? It's because every teacher, paraprofessional, principal, cook and custodian at Dower believes, **"All children can learn. We can teach them. No exceptions. No excuses."** I celebrate their success.



### Certificate of Academic Achievement

1. House Bill 2195 mandates that we immediately put on the OSPI website ([www.k12.wa.us](http://www.k12.wa.us)) what we expect students to know for the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). **This will help students and teachers with accountability** for the basics while freeing up more time for an enriched education.
2. Makes certain that **teachers and parents work together** to help every child move up to their grade level where they've fallen behind.

### Increased community funding

Senate Bill 6211 allows school districts to collect more of the property taxes approved by 60 percent of their voters. This allows districts to consider local funding for the two initiatives (728 and 732) even after the legislature froze the state funding.

### School choice

In 2000, **55 percent** of citizens in our communities **voted "yes" on an initiative to create public charter schools.**

This year, I joined a Democrat and Republican effort to allow teachers and parents to establish public charter schools focused on students who aren't learning the skills they need to succeed.

These new public charter schools can't charge tuition and must accept any student who applies. Where parents and certificated teachers don't choose the school, it doesn't open. **Where parents and teachers aren't satisfied with the school, it closes.**

### Those who abuse in our schools

We all have heard of the heartbreaking stories of abuse. I worked on several proposals to screen such abusers out of our public schools. One Democrat senator thanked me, saying, "Gigi – it's a terrific example of a bipartisan, bicameral effort." All three proposals passed unanimously.

# 28th District • News & Views

## Smoking ban battle

While I heard **impassioned concerns on both sides** of a possible statewide ban on smoking in public places (House Bill 1868 and Senate Bill 5791), the Health Care committees didn't vote on either bill. They're "dead" for the year in Olympia, but one or two organizations are talking about sending you a statewide initiative for your November ballot.



## Other bills you asked about

- **House Bill 2546** - Continues incentives for high-tech tax relief for research and development or pilot high-tech manufacturing programs. I voted "yes." It's law.
- **House Bill 2802** - Bans the sale and transport of what's talked about as "downer" cattle. I voted "yes." It's law.
- **House Bill 2380** - Would have required the governor's approval by reviewing and signing onto any significant new rules that state agencies adopt. I strongly supported it. Last year, the governor vetoed a similar proposal. The majority party in the House refused to allow the members to vote to "override" the governor's action, even though it had passed unanimously.
- **Senate Bill 5437** - The State Board of Education is still working on resolution of the school district boundaries between Clover Park and Steilacoom. The Education Service District Boundary Review Committee will be holding a public hearing on boundary issues between Tacoma and University Place School Districts.
- **House Bill 2387** - Allows the names of former patients who are buried at Western State Hospital to be released so patients can be recognized by name instead of just a number on a brick like it's been for 50 years. I voted "yes." It's law.
- **Senate Bill 5034** - Provides property tax relief for senior and disabled persons. Income eligibility for the property tax deferral program is moved to \$40,000. I voted "yes." It's law. Call me if you'd like details.

## Unfinished business

Last year, Senate Republican and House Democratic leaders joined forces to make bold changes that helped keep jobs in our state. I'm sad to report that this year we **failed to keep doctors from leaving our state** due to their high cost insurance.

Rep. Mike Carrell was a champion of "tort reform." Thanks, too, to Dr. Mike Kelly for his incredible leadership. I think every one of his patients called me after they had seen him.

## Defense of Marriage Act

People are calling asking where I stand on the marriage laws of our state. The law is clear, "Marriage is a civil contract between a male and a female who have each attained the age of 18 years and who are otherwise capable."

I supported this clarity in 1998 and am **one of two legislators who have joined the lawsuit to protect our state law now**. I believe that a man and a woman each have unique, vital contributions in both creating and nurturing a child.

## World War II recognition

After hearing a WWII veteran say, "Each of us has a vision of the world during the war that belongs to us alone, and when we die that world dies with us," we created a **nationally acclaimed oral history program**. I'm working to **expand the project** to include the accomplishments of nurses in military hospitals, women working in factories (like my mother) and other women running the home front alone. I'm requesting \$100,000 (out of \$23 billion) for next year's budget.

## Helping the disabled

I'm working on legislation that would make **assistance to our loved ones and neighbors with developmental disabilities as a permanent part of the state's forecast** of budget needs.



**Bringing students with disabilities to testify on 2SHB2704.**

# Town Hall Meetings

Please join me with your complaints, compliments or questions at a "town hall" meeting:

► **May 4th from 7-8pm**  
Lakewood Library  
6300 Wildaire Rd SW  
**Lakewood, WA 98498**

► **May 6th from 7-8pm**  
Skyline Elementary School Cafeteria  
2301 North Mildred St.  
**Tacoma, WA 98406**

► **May 8th from 9-10am**  
University Place Library  
3605 Bridgeport Way W  
**University Place, WA 98466**

► **May 8th from 11am-Noon**  
Steilacoom Library  
2950 Steilacoom Blvd  
**Steilacoom, WA 98388**

## What's important to you? Please share your thoughts

I'd like to hear from you. Please take time to share your thoughts below and return this card to the address provided.

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**Rep. Gigi Talcott, 10221 Bridgeport Way SW, Lakewood, WA 98499 • 589-7296**

You can also send your thoughts to my e-mail address: [talcott\\_gi@leg.wa.gov](mailto:talcott_gi@leg.wa.gov)

P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**Gigi Talcott**  
State Representative

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